

Let's talk about...



OPERATION REWRITE:

The Agony of Russian Historians


Reprinted from "Foreign Affairs," the story of the faked evidence which Stalin is using to glorify his dictatorship in this witty and revealing article . . .

By BERTRAM D. WOLFE

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Making humans into ants advances to Process 3 in Russia and the long range project of transforming human nature, imperative to make people fit for Communism, proceeds as follows:

1.

Make the robot obedient. This is done by stifling the initiative of self-interest, which is innate in the human animal, with the aid of behavior conditioning as prescribed by the secret police. The end-product is Will-less Man (called Collective Man for the sake of euphony).




2.

Make the robot faithful. This is done by closing his escape into a world to come, so that his heaven shall wither away, and he shall worship only the earthly paradise embodied in the State and the Leader, who made it all happen. The end-product is Soul-less Man.

3.

Make the robot contented. This is done by closing his escape into a world which is gone, so that his past also shall wither away, and he shall be without memory except as the State shall determine. The end-product is Mind-less Man.



When these three attributes have become instinctive, and as natural as eating and sleeping, human nature will have been transformed in an ant hill existence to be known as Communist Society.

Operation Rewrite, which follows, explains the methods and aims of Process 3—anesthetizing the memory of the Russian people.

Of course, history has been rewritten before. Ancient chronicles have been altered to throw more favorable light on the antecedents of the authority doing the altering. Court historians have “gilded” the reigns of their masters. Dictators, such as Hitler, were prone to burn the books which offended against the accepted ideology. These were relatively limited projects, and tainted by selectivity rather than deliberate falsification. Also, be it noted, each generation of historians must revise the texts in keeping with new information revealed by excavations and newly found records.

Nowhere in the annals, however, do we find precedents for the spate of systematic rewriting now going forward in Russia. Nor are there known instances of such “de-truthing” of scholars and scholarship. The ends sought seem to be not mere revision but perversion of history. For Stalin warps history into a Procrustean bed of his own design, using the following devices among others:

Deletions from, and insertions into, the original texts of Lenin’s *Collected Works* as well as his own. The object in this method is to establish his infallibility during and after the October Revolution.

Blotting out of persons and events. The classic example of this method was the expunging of the name of Trotsky from all available records.

Slanting old texts or new versions to create the impression that Tsarist Russia had a beneficent influence which is now carried on by the new Great Russia. This method is used in the rewriting of the histories of the Central Asian Republics, the Balkan nations, and even Slavic nations such as Poland and Czechoslovakia. The object here is obvious: to justify past and future annexations.

Finally, a method is used to convert things and persons into their opposites. Omar Khayyam ceases to be a Persian poet of Nishapur and becomes “a natural product of the Tadzhik people” (a Soviet Republic). Shamil is no longer to be remembered as a hero of the Caucasus who led his people in resisting Tsarist oppression; he is now a “reactionary serving the interests of Britain and Turkey” more than a century ago.

The Soviet historians thus have a tough assignment. They can not rely on anything so old fashioned as truth capable of proof. They must anticipate the next mental curve tossed out by the Unmoved Mover in the Kremlin, and have the history of the item in question already revamped for his pleasure. It is not surprising that they lapse into neurasthenia after the manner of Pavlov’s dogs.

Fortunately, we of the Free World are not in immediate danger of having our history Stalinized. We have our own large collections of Russian materials, notably in the Library of Congress, the Hoover War Memorial at Stanford University, the Harvard College Library, and the New York Public Library.

Fortunately, also, there are many living Americans who experienced the Russian revolution at first hand, and are still writing their own accounts.

A question we well may ask, however, is this: What will the long mental and spiritual black-out do to the Russian people? What will they bring in their hands, should they return to the family of nations and the iron curtain be melted away? For instance, the Kremlin has decreed that Lysenko’s dictum is correct and the official party line, to wit: Acquired characteristics can be biologically inherited. Ergo, human nature can be changed by behavior conditioning. Does Will-less, Soul-less, Mind-less Man perpetuate his acquired characteristics, and bequeath to succeeding generations nothing but his ant-like instincts? * 76

Bertram D. Wolfe is admirably equipped by scholarly research and by residence in Russia to present his sinister foreboding in the form of the brilliant essay which follows. He believes that a study of Stalin’s tactics in historiography in any period should be a guide to Kremlin intentions. The current pressure to rewrite the histories of Moslem republics and countries may suggest plans for the Middle East, possibly in either Iran or Turkey. The rewrite operations in the Balkans may herald absorption of both Bulgaria and Rumania into the Soviet Union. The 19th All-Union Party Congress, October 1952, gave vent to Stalin’s hope for a new Popular Front (of sad memory in the West) and a timely war between capitalist states.

Bruce C. Hopfinger

OPERATION REWRITE:

The Agony of Soviet Historians

FOR over two decades, Soviet historiography has been in steadily deepening crisis. Histories succeed each other as if they were being consumed by a giant chain smoker who lights the first volume of the new work with the last of the old. Historians appear, disappear and reappear; others vanish without a trace.

Originally, only party history was subject to rigid prescription. Then Soviet history was added. Latterly, the area of command performance and commanded conclusions has spread outward to America and Asia and the wastes of Antarctica, backward to the Middle Ages, to Byzantium, to the shadowy origins of the Slavs and the pre-dawn of the Kievan state, to China's earliest culture. One day a given statement of events or interpretation is obligatory. The next it is condemned in words which seem to portend the doom of the historian who faithfully carried out his instructions. If it is a pronouncement of Stalin which he is following, all the more severely must he condemn himself—of course, without involving the Leader in his "self-criticism."

Often the central personages of an event become *unpersons*, as if they had never existed. The Civil War must now be rewritten as if there never had been a War Commissar named Leon Trotsky. The Soviet theatre, once the subject of so many histories, is historyless once more, until somebody contrives to write a new version without a trace of the great innovator-director, Vsevolod Meierhold. On February 15, 1951, *Pravda* accomplished the feat of "commemorating" the tenth anniversary of the Eighteenth Party Conference, in which Voznesensky delivered the main report, without so much as mentioning the name of the reporter!

Today the Balkarians are missing from Volume "B" of the new edition of the "Great Encyclopedia;" the Volga Germans have become an *unpeople*; and the Crimean Tartars, having been expelled from their centuries-old home to a region under the Arctic Circle, have had the place names

of their former habitations extirpated, and are now being subjected to the shrinking of their historical rôle in the Crimea to the point where they are gradually becoming an *unpeople*, too.¹

During the past spring even objects began to become *unobjects*, as *Pravda* and the regional press from February to May reported a grim and thoroughgoing purge of scores of local and national museums all the way from Lithuania to Kazakhstan. The Lithuanian museums were rebuked for failing to show the influence of Great Russian culture and the struggles and longings of their peoples for the extinction of their independence, while the Kazakh museums were condemned for the nostalgic splendor of their daggers, guns, harnesses, bridal costumes, and for failing to display any objects showing Great Russia's civilizing influence and the "progressive" character of her annexation of Kazakhstan.

It would require many volumes to give an account of this continual retroactive rewriting of history. The present article aims to give some notion of the scope of this vast *operation palimpsest*, to seek the "line," or rather some of the fragmentary and frequently contradictory lines, discernible in the revisions; to seek the reasons, or a rationale, for what seems to contain an element of the personal and irrational as well; and to ask what these tamperings with the historical record portend concerning the present and immediate future intentions of the régime. History has become a "weapon," an arm of propaganda, the essential function of which is the justification of the changing policies of the Soviet Government through reference to the "facts" and "documents" of the past. The penchant for making every change in foreign relations or domestic policy historically retroactive serves as a vast though distorting glass through which the observer may see these policy changes magnified. It is that which makes *Voprosy istorii*

¹ Cf. *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, June 4, 1952.

By Bertram D. Wolfe

(*Questions of History*) undoubtedly the most interesting and revealing of all present-day Soviet publications.

Macaulay once said that his idea of hell would be to have to listen to fiends endlessly misquoting history and be unable to correct them. But in the Soviet Union, the historian himself must do the misquoting. His own point of view is neither consulted, nor, except by the accident of coincidence with the line of the moment, ever likely to find expression. The textbook writers and lecturers under the limited absolutism of the last Tsars could easily be identified as liberal and democratic, as in the case of a Platonov, or as conservative and monarchical, as in the case of an Ilovaisky, or as Marxist, as in the case of a Pokrovsky. But under total state absolutism, history, as all of culture, has been "nationalized" and there are no individual viewpoints or private judgments or pluralistic approaches. Tarlé, specialist on Napoleon, is ordered to rewrite his principal work in such fashion as to "prove" that Napoleon himself burned Moscow (no doubt to make it untenable as his winter quarters!). The liberal-democratic Vipper, who first wrote on Ivan the Terrible in the early years of the century, is charged with bringing his book of 1922 "up-to-date" and glorifying the protagonist.

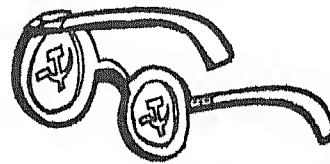
From my experience as a student at Moscow University in 1939-41 [writes S. V. Utechin] I know that the late Professors K. V. Bazilevich and S. V. Bakhrushkin held a negative attitude towards the present régime. Yet in their volumes we find no traces of views different from those professed by Stalin. Thus the personal political opinions of the authors do not necessarily coincide with, and may even be contrary to, the views expressed in their books. These reflect not their political biases . . . but their understanding of the party line.²

As the great editing process embraces more and more of the remote corners of the earth and earliest past, there are no longer safe and neutral topics.

² S. V. Utechin, "Textbooks on History. Soviet Studies," Vol. IV, No. 1.

Nor does the historian enjoy the right to pick his period and theme, nor the right of silence where he cannot in good conscience speak. As in music the politician-critic or the Supreme Critic in the Politburo tells the composers what and how and in what style to compose, so in history. *Voprosy istorii* bristles with menacing strictures upon historians for picking remote, neutral, sharply delimited or apolitical subjects; for neglecting fields which have been given priority in Party directives and the Historical Plan, for drawing their own conclusions or failing to find in the materials the conclusions predetermined for them.

It is suggestive both of the hazards in the field and the real feelings of the historians that, despite urgings, dangled prizes and repeated threats, no one has yet been found to complete a single volume or a single serious article in the field of the history of the Party and the régime, though Stalin himself first suggested it in 1931, has ordered it at regular intervals since, and forced it into the place of top priority in the Five-Year Plan for Soviet Historians adopted in 1946. Fifteen years after the task was first assigned by the Dictator, the lead editorial in *Voprosy istorii* (No. 8, 1949) warned that the failure to produce the ordered works creates a "completely impermissible situation" which "it would be completely wrong to look for objective circumstances to explain." This stubborn silence, continuing up to the moment in which I write, constitutes the most eloquent page in present-day Soviet historiography.



In the twenties, not a politician but a professional Marxist historian, M. N. Pokrovsky, was the virtual dictator in Soviet historiography. He represented a consistent general line ("history is politics

Pokrovsky

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

projected into the past") and made life difficult for fellow historians who did not accept it. But he held to professional standards, had regard for documents and evidence, though at times he wrestled mightily with them to compel them to yield what he sought. And as a historian he had enormous prestige, which was further enhanced by Lenin's preface to his "Short History of Russia," praising it warmly and insisting that it become a textbook and be translated into other European languages.

But in 1931 his excessive respect for the facts of Party history came under Stalin's personal scrutiny. In 1934 he was posthumously purged—he had the luck to die in time—along with all his works and disciples. At about the same time, Ryazanov, Russia's outstanding Marxologist, whose headstrong, self-directed devotion to Marxist documentary scholarship closely resembled Pokrovsky's attitude toward history, suffered a similar posthumous fate.

Pokrovsky was accused of being anti-national and anti-patriotic (he shared Lenin's internationalism and disliked Tsarist wars); of neglecting actual events, dates, facts, periods and personages in favor of generalized sociological schemata (until then considered a hallmark of Marxist historical interpretation); of being "anti-scientific" and "anti-Marxist"; of "underestimating" Lenin (he wrote: "Whenever Lenin differs from me I blindly accept his view; he can see ten feet deeper into the earth than any of the rest of us"); and of underestimating Stalin (which was undoubtedly true and the immediate though not the only explanation of his downfall).

At first it seemed to historians that a new line might emerge which would put pluses where he had minuses, and offer them considerably more freedom for examination of sources without regard to Marxist interpretive schemata. But alas, life was not to be that simple. Though Pokrovsky had been condemned for neglect of concrete historical facts, ere long *Voprosy istorii* (No. 12, 1948) was to give warning that "the proper historian" must be free from "objectivism" and from "an exaggerated attachment to facts," and at home in the citation and application of the "theoretical gener-

alizations" and dictates of the Party line. Now it was not a single, simplistic, recognizable line like Pokrovsky's but a continuous bombardment by *ad hoc* fragments of lines, changing with each political shift or change in mood, frequently internally contradictory, constantly being altered and even suddenly reversed.

Apparently these fragments issue from Stalin's latest pronouncement or some earlier one exhumed from context after four decades, or from the quotations from Lenin or Marx or Engels which adorn their promulgation. But study of such texts will not help the historian, nor is there any real defense in an umbrella of quotations, for in any vast and historically evolved sacred scripture you can find quotations for any side of anything. To quote yesterday's Stalin may today be "talmudism and scholasticism." The historian must divine the Dictator's coming pronouncement, for his latest word is always the last word in history even though Marx, Engels, Lenin and yesterday's Stalin all be united against it. A sudden reversal in Stalin's relations with Germany or England or America is pushed backward retroactively so that the present enemy is absolute evil, and though yesterday an ally, must always have been an enemy. All books, articles and documents that testify to the contrary must be consigned to the Orwellian "memory hole" to be consumed in flames, or must be "rectified" and brought up to date without any mention of the fact that there was ever an earlier version.

Not only changes in relationships, strategy and tactics, even changes in the Dictator's awareness of the nature of his own régime, or his subjective identification with some deed of a figure of the past, say an Ivan IV or a Marshal Kutuzov, can require a complete retroactive revision of the figure thus honored. Such revaluations cannot be deduced by the historian from a study of sources, but only by sensing the reactions of the Dictator whose attitude toward history has been summed up by Orwell in the formula: "Who controls the present, controls the past."

Stalin first entered historiography through the field of personal and party history. In January 1924, one week after the death of Lenin, he chose

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

the occasion of a Memorial Address to predate by some four years the beginning of their personal acquaintance.⁸ At the time it might have seemed merely a faintly ghoulis example of the natural human inclination to reshape the past nearer to the heart's desire. But when one remembers that Lenin had just called for the removal of Stalin as General Secretary, and when one contemplates the subsequent revisions that carried Stalin from "loyal disciple" to "best disciple" and then "only loyal disciple," and on to "faithful companion-in-arms" (*soratsnik*) and "wise guide and counsellor" and more than equal partner, one cannot but be struck by the meticulous attention to detail and long-range planning implied in this first little retouching of history.

A Napoleon, a Trotsky, a Thucydides, a Xenophon or a Josephus may wait to turn his energies into the writing of history until defeat has deprived him of the opportunity of making it. But Stalin engaged in writing history as one of the means by which he climbed to power. That explains the ruthless political utilitarianism, the pugnacious factionalism or *partiinost* which he has impressed upon it. That is why first "rotten liberalism" and then "objectivism" were to become the gravest of historiographical crimes. History was one of the "weapons" with which he fought his way to power, and he enlarged the scope of his revisions with every increase in the actual power drawn into his hands.

There was much to revise. First there was that personal symbol of the Revolution and the régime: the duality-unity, *Lenin-Trotsky*. Mountains of books, newspapers, pamphlets, decrees and documents had to be consigned to the "memory hole," mashed to pulp, or brought out in "corrected" editions, in order to substitute for *Lenin-Trotsky* a new duality-unity, *Lenin-Stalin*.

Then there were the other close associates of Lenin, glorified as "Old Bolshevism" in the struggle with Trotsky, and then themselves destroyed. To obscure all traces of their actual deeds and substitute nameless and monstrous evils that would justify their murder is another task that Stalinist historiography has never ceased to concern itself with. With notable impartiality Stalin has barred

⁸ For the evidence, see the writer's "Three Who Made a Revolution." New York: The Dial Press, 1948. p. 424-7.

foreign and domestic accounts, pre-Stalinist Bolshevik histories, Stalinist histories written to order by Knorin, Popov and Yaroslavsky, the footnotes to the Second and Third Edition of Lenin's "Works," the "Great Encyclopedia," and all the telltale passages in the letters, writings and speeches of Lenin, and of Stalin himself. There is a mass of Lenin-Trotsky correspondence at Harvard that can never be published in the Soviet Union. There is Lenin's "Testament." Typical of Stalin's self-censorship is his omission from his "Collected Works" of his tribute to Trotsky published in *Pravda* of November 6, 1918, on the occasion of the first anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution.

For the foreign observer, the most important document that Stalin has omitted from the corresponding volume of his "Works" is a letter he wrote Lenin in 1920, criticizing the latter's "Theses on the National and Colonial Question" because they failed to provide an intermediate or transitional form for the annexation of new Soviet states, like a "Soviet Germany, Hungary, Poland, Rumania," which have never formed part of the old Tsarist Empire and therefore may object to immediate incorporation in the Soviet Union. This early foreshadowing of the future "People's Democracies" can be found, however, as a footnote to Lenin's "Theses" in the Second and Third Russian editions of his "Works," Vol XXV, p. 624.

The present writer was in Moscow during the first six months of 1929, when on central command every periodical and paper in the Soviet Union broke out with a picture of Stalin on the front page. This was the beginning of the Stalin cult. At first it seemed to me wholly "rational." Having just eliminated Bukharin, the last of the close comrades of Lenin, Stalin had now to become "Old Bolshevism." But a number of circumstances have since caused me to conclude that there is an irrational element also.

First, there was the fury of the purges, with the arrest, execution or reduction to unskilled slave labor of millions: the neutral, the indifferent, the innocent, the loyal, including entire technical, bureaucratic and military layers desperately needed for the enhancement of the very power of

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

the state. It may be urged that such random terror was "needed" on the principle: "If you want to make your enemies afraid, begin by cutting off the heads of your friends." And that total state power in a populous state can spend a few million lives on the process of completely atomizing society so that every particularized atom depends absolutely on the state and no man can depend upon any other. Still, it is hard to believe that so many millions were required, or that the state had so greatly to weaken itself technically in the process.

Second, there is the insatiable and unappeasable appetite of the dictator for the enlargement of the incense, the trembling obedience, the worship, to

the point where he is now the "Coryphaeus" of all the arts and sciences (history of course among them), and is increasingly being endowed with the attributes of a living god.

Third, there was the unexpected discovery while going through the pages of *Zhizn natsionalnostei* (*Life of the Nationalities*—Stalin's personal organ when he was Commissar of Nationalities) that Stalin had retroactively inserted two minor "prophecies" into one of his articles when he included it in his "Collected Works." And more startling still, the discovery of an item headed, "Greetings to Comrade Stalin," with the following (slightly abbreviated) text:

The Conference of National Sections . . . sends you its greetings and declares its conviction that by following firmly along the path pointed out by you for the solution of the national question . . . we will create throughout the world a united, brotherly Communist family which we will teach to appreciate those great merits which belong to you—the leader of the oppressed peoples.

Here is the beginning of that *potok privetstviu* (flood of greetings) which has filled the columns of all the Soviet papers and journals for these many years. But the date was December 24, 1920! Lenin was still alive and in leadership, and, by general consent, it was Lenin who had pointed out the solution of the national question and who was the leader of the oppressed peoples of the world. Stalin was still outranked by five or six of Lenin's associates and had neither expropriated their deeds, nor executed them. Thus the craving for flattery and the need that "the world appreciate his great merits" preceded by almost a decade the "rational" motivation of the Stalin cult.

In 1931 Stalin issued his first public directive on the spirit of the new historiography, in the form of an angry open letter to the editors of *Proletarskaya Revolyutsia* (*Proletarian Revolution*) charging them with "rotten liberalism" for having printed a "discussion article" on the problem of why Lenin had continued to admire Kautsky and the Orthodox-Marxist majority of the German Social Democracy until he was shocked by their stand on the war of 1914. *Bolshevik* (No. 22, 1931) published Stalin's Open Letter with its own appropriate editorial gloss, headed: "Give the Study of the History of Our Party a Scientific



Adoration I

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Bolshevik Footing!" All the earlier histories, from Shlyapnikov's to Yaroslavsky's and Popov's, were attacked. "There must be a thorough housecleaning in all book, textbook and journalistic literature dealing with the history of the Party. . . . The ruthless struggle against every manifestation of rotten liberalism must be intensified. . . . The significance of Stalin's letter far transcends the gateposts of history. . . ."

The Dictator next turned his attention to a close supervision of a new history of the Civil War which was to eliminate all trace of Trotsky—except as a secret agent of the other side. Then he began to dictate all the details of the now renowned "History of the Communist Party: Short Course." On January 20, 1946, *Pravda* reported that Stalin was himself the author of this strange work of historical falsification, endless self-quotation and self-glorification, and that it would appear as Volume XV of his "Collected Works."

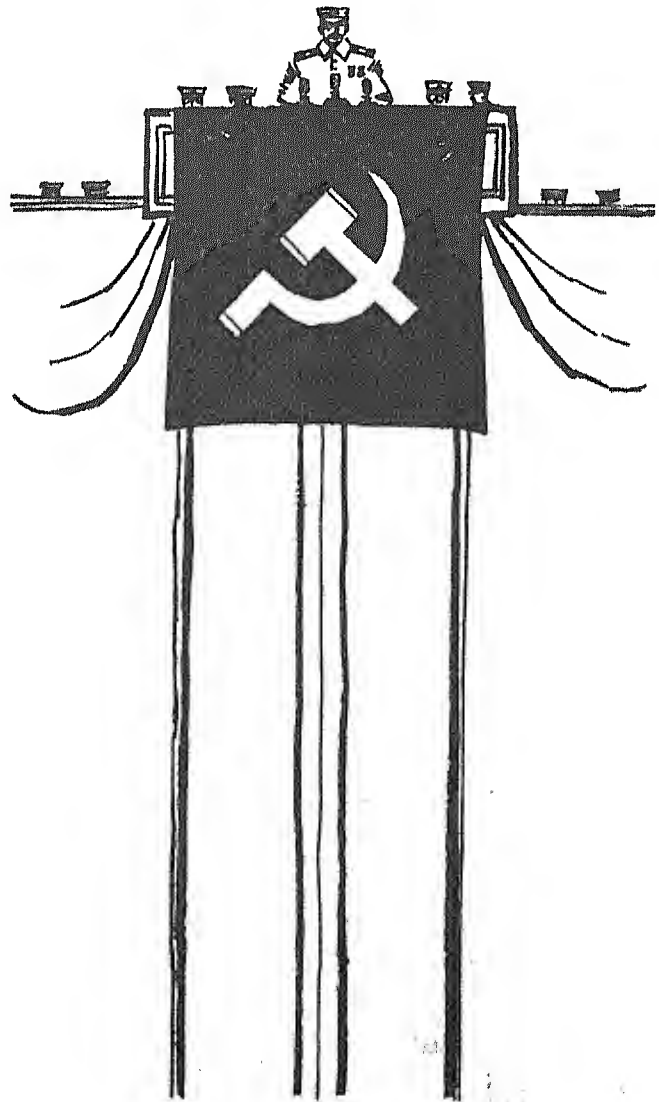
But even Stalin's mighty name has not protected the "Short Course" from the ravages of retroactive obsolescence. Thus the first edition had substituted for a number of *unpersons* the new chief purger, Yezhov, as the "preparer of an uprising of the soldiers on the Western Front in Byelorussia."⁴ It soon developed that Yezhov was only 16 at the time, and, moreover, that the chief purger must himself be purged. Stalin's "Short Course" keeps appearing in revised editions as the greatest, dullest and most mendacious best seller in the history of literature. But he himself has streamlined the Great October Revolution further and further, until the latest version to appear, in the Chronology in the back of the corresponding volume of his own "Collected Works," reads:

Oct. 24 (Nov. 6, New Style)—Lenin arrives at Smolny in the evening. Stalin briefs him on the course of political events.

Oct. 24–25—Lenin and Stalin lead the October uprising.

Whether it be wholly "rational" in terms of the rationale of the total state and the absolute ruler, or whether there be also an irrational element, it should be clear that we are dealing with the most striking example in all history of a man who has succeeded in inventing himself. It takes total or-

ganization and total power—not propaganda skill, but the union of pen and sword in a single hand—to do so complete a job. Once the total state has concentrated in its control not only all the means of production of material but no less of spiritual goods—all the modes of expression, communication, criticism, thought, feeling, all cheers and boos, all love and hate, all paper, ink, type, loudspeakers, microphones, cameras, cinemas, montage and cutting rooms, theatres, walls, schools, churches, streetcorners, all books, magazines, newspapers, leaflets, caricatures, pulpits, chairs, lecterns, meetings halls, all import and export of and traffic in ideas—it becomes possible



Adoration II

⁴ New York: International Publishers, 1939, p. 206.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

to reshape the public past nearer to the heart's desire. Having worked so efficiently in personal and party history, this spirit and method were now applied to general historiography.

Since the beginning of the thirties, Stalin's policies have determined with steadily increasing rigor and detail the character of Soviet historiography. His letter of 1931 on "rotten liberalism;" his brief dogmatic remarks of 1934 on what a Soviet history text and a modern history text should be; the successive liquidations of the two professional journals that preceded *Voprosy istorii*; the spiritual trauma of the purges—all serve as urgent reminders to the historian that "Stalin is the Creator of Soviet Historical Science" (title of article in No. 2, 1949). Yet, if we except his "History of the

Communist Party," all his historical writings, directives and overworked *obiter dicta* which are supposed to serve as guides to historiography would not together make a single chapter. How, then, does the Soviet historian divine what is expected of him? And how shall the observer deduce from the twists and turns of the historiographical line what the real policies and intentions of the Kremlin are?

An especially revealing moment for the examining of these questions is the end of World War II. Dictatorship thrives on war, and total dictatorship thrives on total war on two fronts: against its own people and against the outside world. Hitherto it had offered three justifications for the cruelty, ubiquity and perpetual strain: 1, it was necessary to crush the enemy within; 2, to protect the land



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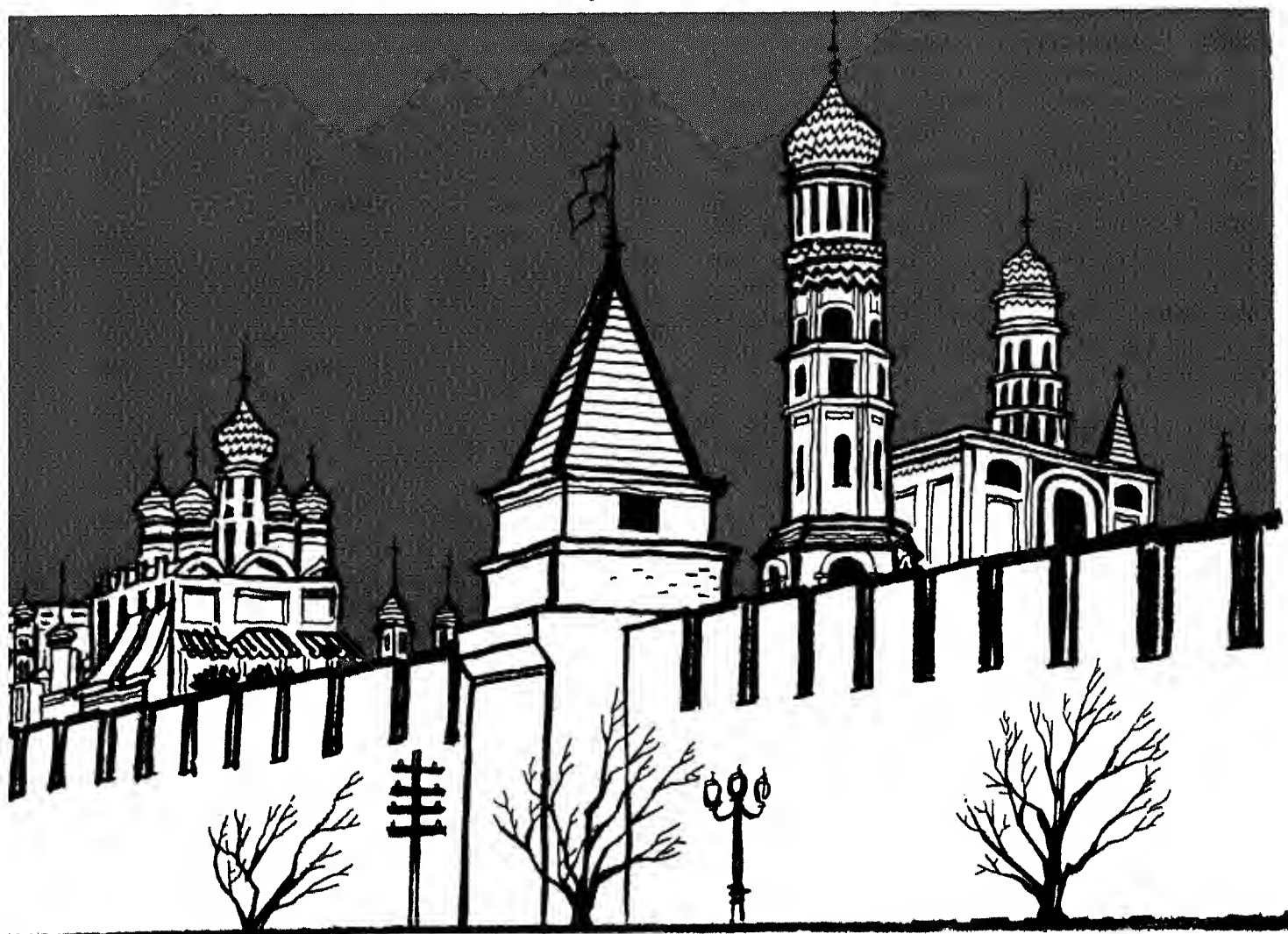
of Socialism from a completely hostile world; 3, and it was justified by the fact that it was already producing an incomparably more glorious life than that beyond its borders. Now all three justifications were suddenly called in question, and the régime was faced with an all-embracing crisis:

(1) The internal enemy had been officially liquidated some time ago, in the late thirties, when it was proclaimed that classes had been abolished, that Socialism had been achieved, that every one loved the Government and the Leader. The "Stalinist Constitution" was supposed to have institutionalized this new state of affairs.

(2) The theory that the Soviet Union was surrounded by a completely hostile world in which it could find neither friends nor allies but only ene-

mies collapsed the day Hitler attacked and—perhaps contrary to Hitler's expectation and Stalin's—Churchill and Roosevelt called upon their peoples to give unstinting support to the Soviet Union. The Soviet people noted with warmth that they had friends and allies. They heard Stalin himself, on the anniversary of the October Revolution in 1941, proclaim that "England and the United States of America possess elementary democratic liberties . . . trade unions . . . parties . . . parliaments." They saw that the Kremlin was summoning them not to defend the dictatorship but the Fatherland and democratic freedoms. Confidently they looked forward to the dawn of a new day in return for their unstinting sacrifices.

(3) As in 1813, once more the many-peopled Russian armies entered the outside world, and

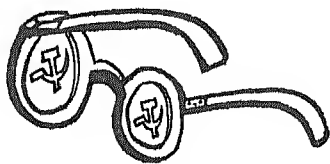


FOREIGN AFFAIRS

felt its impact. The whole fictional world of evil and misery without, and of superiority and perfection within, fell to pieces. Either the dictatorship had to relax, or new enemies and new superiorities had to be synthetically created.

Out of this crisis came Stalin's address to his electors on the inseparability of war and capitalism and the need to continue the strain-and-storm tempo to prepare for future wars; Zhdanov's attacks on the permeation of the "world's most advanced" music, painting, literature and philosophy by "servility to everything foreign," "rootless cosmopolitanism," "kowtowing to the West," lack of *partiinost* and *ideinost* (party spirit and high level of ideas, literally *party-ness* and *idea-ness*); the "revival" of the Comintern; the rejection of Marshall Plan aid by Molotov who, while his régime hesitated, took 89 advisers to Paris, in the end only to advise him on how to say *niet*.

In June 1945, exactly one month after V.E. Day, *Istoricheskii zhurnal* (meaning, simply enough, *Historical Journal*), which had naturally been edited in the spirit of the Grand Alliance, was informed that it had been unequal to its tasks, had lowered the level of historical scholarship, and was forthwith liquidated in favor of a new journal to be called *Voprosy istorii*, or *Questions of History*. The "questions" or "problems" it has had to handle were those of this spiritual reconversion and rearmament.



The first problem was to make the Soviet people forget their most recent and greatest experience. They must forget, or press down into the un verbalized, unthought, unfelt unconscious, the memory of the fact that their Leader had joined in a pact with Hitler, which touched off the war. Since the *Vozhd* had made one of the greatest mistakes in history, the extravagant cult of his infallibility and wisdom must now reach new and unheard-of heights. The memory of lend-lease, the memory of the titanic joint effort and the embrace on the Elbe, of England's valiant holding out alone dur-

ing the period of the Stalin-Hitler pact—so many memories had to be forgotten, or rather, transformed into their opposites.

A sample will serve. The collective history text on the "History of the U.S.S.R.," edited by Pankratova, in its 1945 edition quotes Joseph Stalin on the Normandy landing:

A brilliant achievement. . . . The history of war knows no other enterprise like it for breadth of purpose, grandiose skill, and masterful execution.

One year later the book had been replaced by a new edition in which the passage reads: "On June 6, 1944, Allied forces accomplished a landing in Northern France."

And the latest approved history text, that of textbook prizewinner, Shestakov, describes the Normandy landing in these terms:

England and the United States, in the course of three years of war, dragged out in every way the opening of a second front. . . . But when, after the gigantic victories of the Soviet Army, it became clear that the Soviet Union might alone defeat the enemy, occupy the territory of Germany and liberate all Western Europe, including France . . . in June 1944, the English and American armies left England and landed on the coast of Northern France.⁵

Every such revision of history has its *resonance effect*, spilling over into a score of unexpected places, reverberating backward into the past, so that the enemy of the moment must always have been the enemy. Especially must the high points of alliance and friendship be turned into sinister and hateful acts. And every such revision is the product of *multiple determination*. Thus the Russia-won-the-war-alone-against-a-Hitler-Anglo-American-Imperialist-conspiracy version of World War II inevitably reverberated into the hate-America campaign. But the latter campaign had many additional causes and implications.

It was the United States that had contributed the greatest help and evoked the greatest warmth. It represented the greatest power. Its productivity was the envy and admiration of the materialistic, technocratic official culture. Its conduct in the Philippines and Latin America, above all in war-ruined Europe (like that of Great Britain in India), was the startling refutation of the Lenin-Stalin dogmas of "monopoly capitalist imperial-

⁵ Moscow: 1951, p. 277-8.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

ism" and of "capitalist encirclement." And the living refutation, no less, of the dogma that total statism was the most productive system. America represented the possibility of social reform without revolution ("reformism"), a land of plenty and freedom, visibly achieving an expanding economy and an ever greater measure of social justice and labor-farmer welfare, without the liquidation of entire classes.

The war ended with the Soviet Union as the only Great Power astride the Eurasian land mass, with a power vacuum to the west, and a power vacuum to the east of it. The United States represented the only possible obstacle to the rapid expansion of the Soviet Empire into both vacuums. America sought to restore a balance of power by restoring Europe, and—a little more hesitantly and uncertainly—by reconstructing and restoring a free Asia. Not only was its postwar use of its unprecedented power a reproach and a refutation. Increasingly, it was the main obstacle to the march of Soviet power to world conquest, as America moved from the blind illusions of the Grand Alliance to the sadder and wiser policy of "containment;" from containment to "defense of the free world from positions of strength;" and then to collective defense of Korea as a victim of aggression. The Truman Doctrine stood between the Soviet Union and the Dardanelles; the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Pact blocked the road to Western Europe; American troops formed the backbone of the United Nations armies holding the narrow waist of Korea.

The slow development of America's postwar policies began to inspire hope in all those who dreamed of ultimate liberation. It offered refuge (a little too niggardly) to escaping fighters for freedom. And when it decided that it would not be a party to the forced repatriation of those who had escaped or been taken prisoner, it adopted—almost unwittingly—a policy which makes the Soviet armies and all auxiliary armies potentially unreliable. In this writer's judgment, the decision not to return the Chinese and North Korean prisoners by force will prove to be the turning point in the great conflict between slavery and freedom.

All of these elements, and others like them, enter into the calculations of the Stalin régime, but none of them can be so much as mentioned in overt expression. The vocabulary of *newspeak* and the "researches" and "documentation" of Soviet historians must be employed to make each of these look like its opposite, and to envelop the whole concept of America in hatred. It is sufficient to look at the list of books that are praised and awarded Stalin prizes, to see the volume and the titles of the articles in *Voprosy istorii*, or to note that the articles vilifying the United States are criticized only because they do not go far enough.

If it were an individual instead of the head of a great state and its passive members that were making these statements, ranging from assertions regarding bacteriological warfare to those about castration of colored peoples, we would regard it as pure pathology: loss of memory of recent events, loss of the reality principle, persecutory delusions. But there is "method in his madness," as proved by the fact that while Stalin's Ministry of Hate is filling all the earth with its roars, his Ministry of Love is cooing in a tiny whisper in the *Moscow News* . . . in English.



No field of historiography is now exempt from this inexorable process of retroactive reëditing. The early Middle Ages must be revised to predate by three or four centuries the origins of a high Great Russian culture and of a centralized state. The Varangian theory has to be rejected, not on the basis of the evidence, but because it implies that the Great Russians did not know how to set up a powerful centralized state of their own, except by conquest from without. The new total state is very sensitive about this matter of a "centralized, powerful state." That which the democratic and earlier Marxist historians regarded as oppressive has now become "progressive." It is no longer permitted to suggest that this great state arose in the course of the defense of the Eurasian plain against outside invasion, nor that bondage

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Stalin as the agrarian reformer . . .

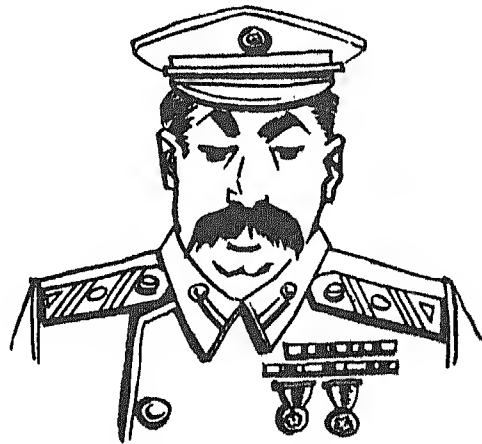
in its wide and sparsely settled lands arose through political imposition, so that the recruiting sergeant and tax collector might know where to find the peasant. Ivan the Terrible must become a progressive and heroic tsar because he enlarged the Russian lands, strove to take the Baltic, set up the *Oprichnina* which Stalin recognizes as an analogue of the G.P.U., purged his opponents and even faithful servitors and son in ways which in his heart Stalin also recognizes, and because he completed the centralization of the state and the absolute power of its ruler.

Soviet Byzantine scholarship has to break with Western, in order to refute the idea that the declining Empire was "rigid, static and obscurantist," in order to show that the countries of south-east Europe, "which have embarked on the path of the People's Democracies," had an early, "progressive and original culture." Soviet historians must discover "the influence of the Slavs on the history of Byzantium." They must "expose" the Ottoman conquest of Byzantium in 1453 and show that "the Turkish assimilators are the most brutal of all assimilators who tortured and maimed the Balkan nations for hundreds of years." Indeed, "the very fact that the 1953 Congress of Byzantine scholars (on the 500th anniversary of 1453) is being held in the capital of Marshallized Turkey" is evidence enough that it will serve "American imperialist and Pan-Turkish aims." After all, Istanbul is but another name for Constantinople, and that for Byzantium, always the Tsargrad of imperial dreams, and the gateway, to boot, to the

Mediterranean and the Near East for the Stalinist Empire.

If Turkey or Iran is slated as victim of the next forward move in the Near East, then Lenin's friendship with the new Turkey and denunciation of Tsarist aspirations in Iran must be buried seven fathoms under the ground. The influence of the high Iranian civilization upon the Tadjiks must be denied, or, as has actually been done, reversed. So must the influence of the Turks upon the Turkic peoples of the Soviet Union. Only Great Russian influence remains, even if it has to be invented. Adding to the multiple determination of the process, there is the restlessness of these Soviet Iranian and Turkic Mohammedan peoples, the growth of their national feelings, the specter of Pan-Turanianism and Pan-Iranianism as possible counterfoils to Pan-Slavism.

The history of the Balkans and other "People's Democracies" is also being rewritten in the Soviet Historical Section of the Academy of Sciences, and particularly in the Slavic Studies Section. Bulgaria is getting a new look. Non-Slavic Albania has "longed for centuries for liberation from the Turkish yoke and has long sought the friendship which now binds it to the Soviet peoples." Rumania's animus toward old Russia is being retroactively transformed, and her language being considered for honorary Slavic citizenship. Tito has become the eternal traitor, and in 1941 was simultaneously serving Hitler and Anglo-American imperialists.



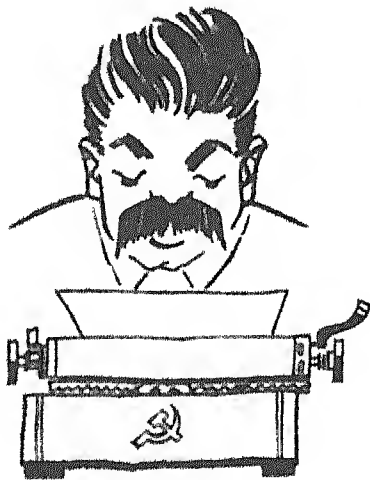
. . . the military strategist . . .

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Two successive editings of Czechoslovak history have been scrapped, and the third, only a year old, is already under fire. The Polish historians are in continuous torment. Poland's culture must of course be decisively influenced by the Great Russian, but not by Rome or the West, while all trace of Polish influence upon Great Russian culture is being deleted or equipped with a minus sign. "The task of scientific history is to relate events truthfully," the Poles are admonished by *Voprosy istorii* (Nov. 4, 1949) "and to show that the responsibility for the policy of hostility toward Russia in the past rests not with the Polish people but with the governing classes." In all the partitions, the Russian share of Poland was justified.

To the "memory hole" have been consigned all the works of Marx and Engels on the menace of Russian absolutism, imperial expansion, Pan-Slavism, in favor of the restoration of Poland "with the boundaries of 1772," in favor of Shamil and Georgian independence. After 15 years of suppression, Stalin published his secret attack of 1934 on Engels' article "On Russian Foreign Policy." But Marxism is still needed as an ostensibly invariant philosophy to refer to in vindicating changing policies, so for the most part this censorship proceeds in absolute silence. With the retroactive purging of Ryazanov, no Marxist scholar dares continue the publication of these articles in the *Gesamtausgabe*.

In 1934 Stalin could still rebuke a textbook for



... gentleman of letters ...



... latter day saint.

failing to brand "the annexationist-colonializing rôle of Tsarism . . . the Prison-House of Peoples;" its "counter-revolutionary rôle in foreign policy . . . as the international gendarme;" and for failing to show the influence of Western thought upon the democratic and Socialist revolutionary movements in Russia. To quote the 1934 Stalin in Russia 1952 would be to take one's life into one's hands.

Now Great Russian nationalism is inextricably blended with "Soviet patriotism." Internationalism is for use abroad, and is defined by Stalin as "unconditional loyalty to the Soviet Union." At home it is "cosmopolitanism" and "servility to all things foreign." Nationalism of any other variety than Great Russian is "bourgeois nationalism" and is fatal. A Sosyura may not "love the Ukraine" except he remember to love above all its yearning for annexation and the Great Russian imprint upon its culture. With each revision, the Balkan states move longingly another step toward incorporation.

Each of the "autonomous republics" is rewriting its history, revising its poetry, remaking its memories. Heroes become anti-heroes (Shamil, Kennessary); insurrections against tsarism until yesterday celebrated are today execrated; epics become anti-epics ("Dede Korkut") or the versions that have lived so long in oral tradition and are the very national memory of illiterate peoples are purged and reissued in "new authentic texts."

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The expurgation of the epic ["Manas"] should be strictly scientific and principled. It should take into account all the historical circumstances in the life of the people. This demands a suitable selection of variants, songs and episodes, a selection of which the fundamental principle must be the preservation in the epic of all the best elements inherent in the past of the Kirgiz people.^a

Even so did Orwell picture a functionary in his Ministry of Truth whose task was to "produce garbled versions—definitive texts they were called—of poems which had become ideologically offensive but which, for one reason or another, were to be retained in the anthologies."



Where once is was "Lenin and Stalin,"
revised history makes it "Stalin and Lenin."

Thus the great operation rewrite which began with Stalin's obliteration of his contemporary political and personal history and the invention of a new past for himself has spread outward through the boundaries of the Old Russian and the New Soviet Empires, and backward to the beginning of recorded time. The process is vast and all-embracing, even as the total state is total. But the immediate aims are simple enough:

To strengthen the power of the state over the minds of men and make it ever more complete and absolute.

To enlarge the power of the Leader and the cult of his infallibility and grandeur by identifying him with every mighty tsar and military leader, with every hero of thought and deed, with the deepest historical memories of the people over whom he rules, for his omniscience, omnipotence, omniscience and infallibility are the very fulcrum of

all the levers of totalitarian organization and power.

To destroy the critical sense, the historical perspective, the possibility of objective check or comparison from outside the system.

To "justify" the global ambitions and "demonstrate" the inevitable global triumph of the total state régime as well as its inexorably intensifying total organization within its own borders and its empire.

To strengthen its centralization by the increasing Russification and Stalinization of the "auton-



omous" units of the "federation" and the "sovereign People's Democracies" of the empire.

To root out all memories of comradeship with recent allies and as far as possible all friendliness and all common human fellow-feeling for the peoples who have been selected as the next victims and for those selected as the long-range enemy.

To counteract the war-weariness and the weariness with the unending internal war on the part of a people who have been kept unremittingly on the stretch for over a third of a century.

To provide, in the form of a synthetic national glory and glory of the state and system, *ersatz* satisfactions as a substitute for any real fulfillment of the revolution's promises.

To close the eyes of Soviet citizens and conquered subject peoples to the shabby and cruel realities that the régime inflicts upon them and to close their ears to the peaceful, friendly and attractive message of the outside, non-totalitarian world.

^a *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, May 27, 1952, 2.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

To prepare the next steps in the long-range aim: the total conquest of the world.

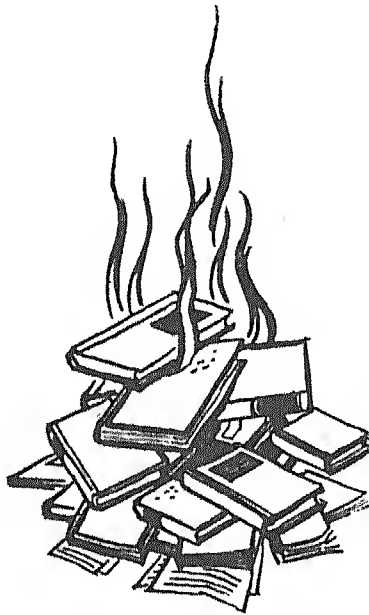
By an examination of each sudden historical revision or reversal one can deduce what the next tactical objectives of the Kremlin are, even though not the tempo of its moves—for into the actual moves themselves enter other calculations of power and of relations of forces that reside in the non-totalitarian world.

We can, however, deduce from the spirit and sweep of the new Soviet historiography that there will be no relaxation in the cold and not-so-cold war of the total state on its own people, on its neighbors, and on all the peoples of the earth. The unending war of nerves of which the rewriting of all history is a significant segment grows sharper not gentler, more reckless not more cautious, more inclusive not less.

As long as all the more spacious cities of the world have not been reduced to slums and rubble,

Stalin's 1947 address proclaiming the 800-year-old Moscow the only city of the world free of slums is in danger of objective refutation. As long as anywhere in the world there is more freedom, more happiness, more comradeship and love, or simply a higher standard of living and higher productive power, Stalin cannot make good his boast that the Soviet system and way of life are superior.

Indeed, as long as anywhere in the world there is a lone surviving copy of any document which he has consigned to the "memory hole," or a single historian writing and pursuing research in freedom from the "guidance and control" of the total state, there is always the danger that world history, Russian history, Soviet history, Party history and the personal history of Joseph Stalin may once more be reconstructed, and that History itself, embodiment of the human memory and consciousness of self, may revive out of the ashes of its works.



SUMMARY

In a capsule, Mr. Wolfe's thesis is this: Stalin has transmuted history-writing from a search for truth into a propaganda-weapon for the "total conquest of the world."

The analysis is divided into seven parts: Stalin's three requirements to set up his historiography; his dilemma after World War II; his two operations with a political purpose going on now. The seventh part defines his immediate aims.

I. Stalin's First Requirement: Annihilate Naysayers.

To obliterate contradictory evidence certain persons and things had to vanish as though they had never been. Companions of Lenin who opposed Stalin became *unpersons*—their names erased from the scrolls. Nationalities suspected of disloyalty in war, such as the Volga Germans and the Crimean Tartars, became *unpeople*,—their identities evaporated, and their peoples scattered through the steppes. Material things which offended him, such as museums devoted to native arts instead of to Great Russian benefices, became *unobjects*,—their contents marked for the trash can.

Thus Stalin,—the Fumigator of the Stage; the Creator of Oblivion.

II. Stalin's Second Requirement: Create A New Standard for Truth.

1. By Stupefying the Scholar's Conscience.

The downgrading of historians was accomplished by decreeing that all facts are not created free and equal. There are facts; and there are facts significant for future plans. Significant facts are determined by Stalin. Some historians, notably Pokrovsky (honored by Lenin for his "Short History of Russia") was purged posthumously in 1934 for "generalized dicta," whereas other historians were purged after World War II for "exaggerated attachment to facts." Historians are forced to misquote and repudiate themselves; and they must divine and reflect the current line and attitude of Stalin. This necessity quite understandably gives them the jitters. The scholar's conscience becomes a casualty.

2. By Reshaping the Past.

When Stalin changes his line or attitude (toward anything under the sun, past or present) the historians must push the new concept backward to include all that went before. The present enemy must be viewed as having been the enemy always. Books, articles, statements, and so on to the con-

trary, must be purified or burnt.

Thus Stalin,—the Transmutor of Scholars; the Remaker of Truth.

III. Stalin's Third Requirement: Create the Myth of Personal Infallibility.

This process began immediately after the death of Lenin when Stalin began a long range process of replacing the Lenin-Trotsky duality, (as remembered by the Russian people) with a Lenin-Stalin duality in the Hall of Revolution Fame. To that end he began deletions from his Collected Works, such as his tribute to Trotsky on the first anniversary of October, and an early letter to Lenin advocating means to annex new Soviet states such as "Soviet Germany, Hungary, Poland, Rumania." (This was a foreshot on 1940). The process led him into killing off the Old Bolsheviks; insertions of fictitious prophecies with his signature in old records; and encouragement of flattery and incense as though he were a man-god. By 1931 he felt ready to call for a rewriting of textbooks on party history and the civil war. He had by that time invented a new past for himself—the leader who was always right.

Thus Stalin—the Infallible; the Supreme Designator of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful—past, present, and yet to be.

IV. Stalin's Dilemma: Contradictions After World War II.

This halo of infallibility became a bit flimsy when the Russian people realized the gaps between Kremlin preachments and hard facts:

1. They were asked to hate the Nazis, then to help the Nazis (after Stalin's deal with Hitler, August 1939, which unleashed World War II), then to fight the Nazis in 1941 to the death in their Third Fatherland War. Their emotions could not keep pace with Stalin's shifts in policy.

2. They were told the internal enemy must be crushed—but the 1936 Constitution was supposed to have marked the end of classes and internal opposition.

3. They were told the outside world was all hostile—but in 1941 both Britain and America became Allies in a common struggle against Hitler.

4. They were told that the Soviet system provided superior values and material things, compared with the outside world—but the Red Armies returning in 1945 knew that boast to be a lie.

The dilemma for Stalin was this: The war alliance had broken down the Socialist quarantine,

and made possible the victory over Hitler. Therefore, the Kremlin either had to continue the path of collaboration with Britain and America and make a peace settlement, or it had to revert to Socialist quarantine and postpone the peace settlement indefinitely.

Stalin did not delay. His course required the synthetic creation of new enemies, internal and external. His decision was apparent in his speech of February 1946, in which he declared that war and capitalism are inseparable, and that, therefore, the Russian people could not be allowed to relax. He then reverted from war time cooperation to a hostility previously reserved for the Nazis. He slammed down an Iron Curtain, revived the Comintern (as a Cominform) and rejected the Marshall Plan for both Russia and the satellites. His chosen vehicle for the new line was, and is, a journal: *Voprosy istorii* (Questions of History) which he created for the purpose.

V. Stalin's Infallibility Restored: Operation Hate America.

In order to restore his halo, Stalin had to blot out from the minds of the Russian peoples the memory of their great national experience of victory through coöperation with the Allies. This objective was approached by the de-scholarized historians of the New Truth along three lines:

1. Downgrade Help From Allies. The Normandy invasion became a puny effort on a feeble second front, hardly more important than the North African venture. Russia, therefore, had to win the war alone, despite the hampering efforts of British and American imperialism. As for that happy fraternization on the Elbe when Germany was beaten—that never was!

2. Downgrade America. Lend Lease was accepted, true, but it was only another device to make Russians shed their blood in the interest of the imperialists. The American productive system is inferior to the Soviet statism; estimates to the contrary must be expunged.

3. Hate America. The United States has erected obstructions to the legitimate extension of People's Republics. These measures include Aid to Greece and Turkey, the Marshall Plan, NATO, and Point Four. Moreover, the United States provides the leadership, the arsenal, and a large part of the manpower, for opposition to Soviet plans for Europe and Asia. Therefore, Hate America is the watchword; America uses "germ warfare."

VI. Stalin's Rewrite Extended: Operation Glorification of Russia.

Having perfected the process within the Great Russian orbit, Stalin now extends the blotting-out process backward in time and outward in space.

1. Russia's Remote Past.

To admit that Scandinavians founded the Kievan dynasty would reflect on the Slavic know-how and statecraft. Ergo, Rurik must be blotted out. Byzantine history must be revamped to prove that the untutored Slavs influenced the decadent Greeks, not vice versa as hitherto supposed. And Ivan the Terrible becomes a hero because he built a "centralized powerful state" and expanded Russia—thus a true predecessor of Stalin.

2. Russia's Tsarist Past.

More recent history likewise must be recast to show that Tsarist policies were a permanent benefit to the Moslem peoples of Central Asia; to Turkey and to Iran; to Balkan peoples, and to Slavs, such as Czechoslovaks and Poles. The Tsarist share in the partition of Poland was in the interest of the people of Poland, as distinct from the nobles. Marx and Engels must be corrected on this point.

3. Russia's Soviet Present and Future.

The true glory, however, is reserved for Great Russian nationalism, which is a synonym for Soviet patriotism and loyalty to the Soviet Union. Autonomous republics must now reshape their past; re-scan their epics; heroes who revolted against the tsars must be cast into oblivion. All memories of former national identities will pale before the effulgent light from Moscow. And Stalin's face will replace that of the saints on the ikons, for he is the source of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful.

VII. Stalin's Purpose.

By inventing a new past for himself Stalin began a process which now is unlimited by time or space. His more important immediate aims are:

To enlarge his own infallibility and the absolute power of the state.

To Russianize (Stalinize) the autonomous races within U.S.S.R. and immediate neighbors.

To glorify the Great Russian race (a substitute for the better life long promised) by blackout of the Allies and all outside help in World War II.

The long range aim is total conquest of the world.

The question for us: Can we deduce the Kremlin tactical intentions by study of the tactical moves in historiography? Mr. Wolfe believes we can.

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